

BACKGROUND



commission of the churches on international affairs

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INFORMATION

**MARSHALL ISLANDS:
37 years after**

**Report of a World Council of Churches
Delegation to the Marshall Islands,
20 May - 4 June, 1983**



Map taken from *Report of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Conference*, Port Vila, Vanuatu, July 10 - 20, 1983.

MARSHALL ISLANDS : 37 years after

**REPORT OF A WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
DELEGATION TO THE MARSHALL ISLANDS,
20 MAY - 4 JUNE, 1983**

(A shorter version of this report
was distributed as Document PR 2 - 2
at the WCC VI. Assembly in Vancouver, Canada,
24 July - 10 August, 1983)

**Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
World Council of Churches**

1983

MARSHALL ISLANDS :

37 years after

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DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

In its Statement on Peace and Justice, the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Vancouver, Canada, from 24 July to 10 August 1983, said that "nuclear weapons claim victims even in the absence of war, through the lasting effects of nuclear bombings, weapons testing and the dumping of nuclear wastes." Through personal testimonies and vivid collective presentations by the Pacific participants, the Assembly was reminded on several occasions that the life, the culture and the environment of Pacific islanders continue to suffer today from the nuclear tests of the 1940's and the 1950's, from the weapons testing of the past two decades, as well as from the dumping of nuclear waste.

This issue of the *CCIA Background Information* contains the report of a WCC delegation's visit to the Marshall Islands a few weeks before the Sixth Assembly. Situated at the eastern edge of Micronesia, with a land area of about 180 square kilometers, the Marshall Islands has experienced since 1947 at least sixty-six large atomic and hydrogen bomb tests and numerous other weapons tests such as the MX missile. Thirty-seven years after the first atomic bomb was exploded on Bikini Island, the lives of the Marshallese people continue to be affected in ways that could not have been foreseen when the experiments began. As the report demonstrates, it is not only human life that is destroyed or threatened, but the culture and the environment have sustained long-term and perhaps irreparable and permanent damage. The fate of the Marshall Islands is an impelling warning to humankind on the verge of a nuclear catastrophe of unthinkable proportions, even though not one of the weapons tested has yet been used in a situation of current conflict.

The WCC initiative to send a delegation needs to be placed in context. There were two immediate precipitating factors. In the first place, in May 1982, an ecumenical team visited the Marshall Islands as part of the pre-Sixth Assembly worldwide church-to-church visitation programme organized with a view to acquainting the WCC constituency about the breadth and diversity of WCC concerns. This pre-Assembly team visit coincided with the much publicized "Operation Homecoming" in the Marshalls, when over eight hundred people sailed to Kwajalein Island for an "indefinite stay" as a demonstration against their eviction from their home by the US military into the crowded and unsanitary conditions in Ebeye. The visit of the ecumenical team was reported in the local press. Secondly, as a result of this visit, an open letter to the WCC was published in the *Marshall Island Journal* (29 June 1982), urging the WCC to look into the lasting effects of residual radiation in the Marshalls.

But the delegation's visit must also be set in a broader ecumenical perspective. The churches of the Pacific and the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) have, for a

number of years, regarded the struggle for a Nuclear-Free Pacific as an issue of top priority, thus reflecting the special concern of the Pacific community of nations on this issue. The last Assembly of the PCC highlighted the Micronesia situation as a key area for its work. Similarly, commitment to peace and disarmament has been among the long-standing concerns of the ecumenical movement. The WCC has systematically responded to this commitment in a variety of ways and has adopted very clear positions on such related questions as threats to peace, infringements of sovereignty, human rights, militarism and nuclear disarmament.

In view of this history of ecumenical affirmation for peace and disarmament, the WCC was able to respond to a request from the churches of the Pacific to visit the Marshall Islands. Preparation for the visit was based on established procedures for ecumenical collaboration involving extensive consultations with the churches in the Marshall Islands, which served as the delegation's hosts, the PCC and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) and the WCC. The collaboration of the NCCCUSA was extremely important because the USA continues to administer the Marshall Islands under a United Nations mandate called a "Strategic Trust", signed in 1947, which *inter alia* permits the US strategic control and military use of the territory.

In making the visit, the delegation had four objectives :

- (i) to assess the residual radiation problem as an environmental and health hazard,
- (ii) to study the social and human cost of the military presence of the United States of America,
- (iii) to consult with the churches in the Marshalls on actions related to points (i) and (ii) that they may wish to propose, and
- (iv) to explore with the churches in the context of WCC's standing concerns for peace and disarmament, long-term strategies for mobilizing the commitment of the churches around the world on these issues.

The delegation's report seeks to fulfil these four objectives. Its main findings substantiate the thesis that nuclear weapons claim victims even in the absence of war and in the process raises fundamental questions about the ethical implications and the legality of the development and possession of nuclear arms. It provides a comprehensive and vivid picture of what it means to a people to live with radiation as a "basic pervading reality" around which a "new culture, vocabulary and mythology have developed". The carefully written report also includes a wide range of recommendations and issues to be addressed by the ecumenical movement and the international community.

In addition to the report itself, three members of the delegation have written articles to supplement their basic findings, which we have also reprinted in this issue of *Background Information*. They are particularly noteworthy in that they give the reader historical notes about the political evolution of the Marshalls, more background information on the plight of the Enewetok people and the Bikinians, both of whom have been uprooted from their island homes as a result of nuclear tests, and a personal reflection about the visit.

A short version of the delegation's report was distributed at the WCC Sixth Assembly and was used by participants in their discussions on the Assembly Resolution on the Pacific (reprinted on p. 34) and in two of the Assembly Issue Groups: "Peace and Survival in a Nuclear Age" and "Struggling for Justice and Human Dignity". In the

Assembly Plenary on the Pacific, a Marshallese islander, Ms. Darlene Keju-Johnson delivered a powerful personal testimony (reprinted on p. 31), which received much coverage in the international press.

Confusing the personal testimony of Ms. Keju-Johnson as the report of the delegation, Ambassador Fred M. Zeder II, the US President's Personal Representative for Micronesia Status Negotiations, released to the *Pacific Daily News* and the *Marshall Islands Journal* a letter he had written to Mr. Victor Hsu, Executive Secretary at the UN Headquarter Liaison Office of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, who had organized the visit. The letter was carried as a news article by the two newspapers on 12 August, two days after the closing of the Assembly. The *Marshall Islands Journal* has since published *in extenso* the rebuttal and response by the Rev. David Williams, a member of the delegation and Ms. Keju-Johnson herself. It also carried the short version of the delegation's report in installments, and the full text of Mr. Hsu's response to Ambassador Zeder. The texts of these letters are reproduced in this *Background Information* under the title "Critical Correspondence" on p. 35.

The issues raised in this publication will remain on the ecumenical agenda in the coming years. In its Resolution on the Pacific, the Assembly recommended that the WCC programmes involving the Pacific be intensified. It also urged the member churches "to strengthen their support for and solidarity with the Christians and churches of the Pacific in their struggles for political and economic independence and for a nuclear free Pacific, by concrete educational and advocacy activities, combined with a pastoral approach involving prayers and intercessions." It is our hope that this issue of *CCIA Background Information* will be helpful in this process.

Geneva, December 1983

Ninan Koshy
Director

We're so sorry to leave our home;
We know that we will never find
a place like our home, Bikini.

Even at night time when the
pillow is under our heads
We will always be thinking about
our island.

Our bodies are here, but our minds
are still in our island.

Wherever we go, we will never forget
our home island, Bikini.

(This farewell song, composed on a US military boat by inhabitants being evacuated from Bikini on February 1946, was sung for the ecumenical delegation. Translation: Hansen Lalimo, Pastor at Kili.)

MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION

- Kara L. COLE (Moderator): Administrative Secretary of the Friends United Meeting and Member, Board of Governors, National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA.
- Thomas B. COCHRAN: Nuclear Physicist serving as a Senior Staff Scientist for the Natural Resources Defense Council Washington, D.C.
- Baiteke NABETARI: General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches.
- B. David WILLIAMS, Jr.: Associate Director for Peace Issues, National Council of the Churches of Christ, USA, until recently Coordinator of the Church and Society Program, Pacific Conference of Churches.

THE ITINERARY

19 May to 4 June 1983

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| May | 19 Thursday | Arrival in HONOLULU. |
| | 20 Friday | Meetings as a group, and briefings by : Rev. Eldon Buck and Mrs. Alice Buck, former missionaries in the Marshall Islands; Ms. Darlene Keju-Johnson, a Marshallese working on her master's degree in public health; Mr. Giff Johnson, journalist and staff member of the Pacific Concerns Resource Center. |
| | 21 Saturday/
22 Sunday
(International
date line) | Flight to MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS.
Conversations and tour around Uliga and Rita with Mr. Alfred Capelle and Rev. Richard Engstrom. Reception and dinner at Assumption Catholic Church for church people and community leaders. Kara Cole and David Williams hosted at the Marshalls Theological College, Tom Cochran and Baiteke Nabetari at the Roman Catholic Church. Conversations with Rev. Richard Engstrom and Fr. Tom Marciniak. |
| | 23 Monday | At the Government Center, interviews with : Mr. Tony DeBrum, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Republic of the Marshalls; Larry Edwards, Foreign Service Officer; Senator Jeton Anjain of Rongelap; Mr. Gushi Chutaro, leader of "Voice of the Marshalls" (a political party in favour of commonwealth status). |
| | 24 Tuesday | Interviews with : Senator Ishmael John and 7 councilmen from Enewetok Atoll; Attorney Max Messman of the Micronesian Legal Services. |
| | 25 Wednesday | Trip to VILLAGE LAURA.
Meeting with the church deacons (about 30 persons), Rev. Nashon Naiser, presiding. Interview with Mr. Gerald Knight, Curator of the Marshall Islands Museum, former Peace Corps Volunteer and author of <i>Man The Reef</i> (a translation of Marshallese oral literature). Conversation |

with students of the Marshalls Theological College. Interview with Mrs. Mary Lanwi, community leader and manager of Women's Craft Cooperative.

- 26 Thursday Flight to UTIRIK.
Meeting with Senator Donald Matthew of Utirik. Interview with Mayor Aaron Matthew. Church meeting (about 60 persons).
Return to MAJURO.
Dinner with Mr. Tony DeBrum, Secretary of Foreign Affairs.
- 27 Friday Interview with Dr. Tom Hamilton, Specialist of Internal Medicine working for the Marshall Islands Atomic Victims Litigation Project.
- 28 Saturday Tom Cochran reviewed various radiological reports at the Government Center.
Flight to KILI.
Rev. Hansen Lalimo hosting. Informal conversations, meeting in church (about 35 persons).
- 29 Sunday Morning worship at United Church. Evening dinner and meeting with members of the town council (about 30 persons).
- 30 Monday (Memorial Day) Conversation with Mr. Johnny Johnson, public school teacher. Tom Cochran visited the dispensary.
Flight to MAJURO.
Interview with Mr. Oscar De Brum, Chief Secretary, Republic of the Marshalls.
- 31 Tuesday Conversation with Senator Henchi Balos, representing the Bikini people. Conversations with 2 Americans working at the Kwajalein Missile Range.
- 31 Tuesday/
30 Monday (because of the presence of the US military base on Kwajalein, the date on this atoll conforms with that of the USA) Flight to KWAJALEIN.
Meeting with Rev. Pijja Matauto, Pastor of United Church, Ebeye, and Rev. Harlan Shippy, Protestant Chaplain for the Kwajalein Missile Range. Walking tour of Ebeye. Tom Cochran toured the Ebeye hospital with Dr. Allen Tanens. Evening meeting in Ebeye church (about 75 persons).
- 31 Tuesday Conversations with: newly elected Kwajalein Mayor, Mr. Alvin Jacklick; Mr. Howard Ladd, Vice President of Global Associates, principal logistics support contractor for the Kwajalein Missile Range; Mr. William Harralson, Public Relations Officer, Kwajalein Missile Range.

Conversation with Mr. Aeto Langkis of Wotho, translated by Mr. Billy Samson, Clerk of Court, Ebeye.

May 31 Tuesday/
June 1 Wednesday
(Marshall Islands
date)

Flight to RONGELAP.
Meeting with Senator Jeton Anjain. Public meeting in the shelter at the airstrip (about 100 adults and children), followed by a tour through the village. On the return flight to Kwajalein, Tom Cochran had a conversation with Dr. W.L. Robison of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories, Project Director for the Northern Marshall Islands Radiological Surveys, who was returning from a field trip to Bikini Atoll.

June 1 Wednesday/
May 31 Tuesday
(USA date)

Return to KWAJALEIN and EBEYE.
Conversation with Senators Imata Kabua and Ataji Balos, at United Church, Ebeye.

June 1 Wednesday

Private conversations and team consultation. Meeting with Fr. Leonard Hacker, S.J., Parish Priest of Ebeye. Meeting with Lijon Eknlang and Bweian Riklong of Rongelap, both victims of thyroid sickness. Attended the graduation program and banquet of the Ebeye Christian Elementary School.

2 Thursday

Ferry to KWAJALEIN ISLAND.
Conference with Col. John Banks, Commanding Officer of the Kwajalein Missile Range, with staff, including Howard Ladd, William Harralson, Harlan Shippy. Conversation with Fr. Don O'Brian, Roman Catholic Chaplain at Kwajalein Missile Range.

2 Thursday/
3 Friday
(Marshall Islands
date)

Return to MAJURO.
Evening reception and dinner hosted by Rev. Jude Samson at Uliga United Church, Majuro.

4 Saturday

Team consultation. Meeting with a 6-person delegation from the "Voice of the Marshalls" political party, (an opposition party opposed to Free Association, in favour of Commonwealth status). Dinner meeting with Rev. Richard Engstrom and Fr. Tom Marciniak of the local planning committee. Meeting with Senator Ishmael John and a delegation of Enewetok people.

Flight to HONOLULU.

THE REPORT

Stimulus for the sending of an ecumenical team to the Marshall Islands has been the continuing concern expressed by the churches of the Pacific, especially through the Pacific Conference of Churches, as well as requests from the Marshall Islands themselves. The final decision was made by the World Council of Churches in consultation with the leaders of the United Church of Christ in the Marshalls and the Roman Catholic Church there. A local ecumenical planning committee, composed of leaders of the United and Roman Catholic Churches, was the host of the delegation and suggested the basic local itinerary.

The *purposes* of the visit were :

- a) to assess the residual radiation problem as an environmental and health hazard;
- b) to study the social and human cost of the US military presence;
- c) to consult with the churches of the Marshalls regarding these questions; and
- d) to explore with the churches, in the context of the WCC's ongoing concerns for peace and disarmament, long-term strategies for mobilizing the commitment of the churches around the world on these issues.

It should be noted that while the visiting team included an expert on radiation and its effects, it did not presume to take up a highly technical role. We were essentially a church delegation, sent as an expression of church concern, willing to listen to all persons and groups having significant messages about that situation. We saw our role as being interpretive, reflective, consultative and directed towards a clearer, more helpful response on the part of the churches.

Among the categories of people encountered were : those displaced from their land; groups that experienced high levels of radioactive fallout; people living in "temporary" homes or affected because their land continues to be used for US presence and missile testing; officials of the Marshall Islands Government and other political leaders; church leaders and missionaries; medical doctors, an anthropologist and a lawyer; US officials and civilian employees at Kwajalein and American scientists from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories.

1. THE HERITAGE OF ATOMIC TESTS

In the 37 years since the atomic bomb was first "dropped" on the Marshalls at Bikini, the lives not only of the exiles from their homeland (Bikini and Enewetok), or the groups directly irradiated, but the lives of *all* Marshallese have been radically altered. The effects of radiation pervade their existence far beyond the readily observable and reported

health and environmental effects associated with the extensive US nuclear weapons testing programme in the Marshalls. Today, in the broad sense, “radiation” is a basic, pervading reality for all Marshallese people.

Indeed, a new culture, vocabulary and mythology have developed around the radiation question. Whenever there is a physical debility, a birth anomaly or other abnormality, the people tend to believe that such had not occurred before “The Bomb”. Cases of fish poisoning, unusual plant disease, the demise of the highly valued arrowroot plant (a traditional staple), seem invariably to be attributed to radiation, even though this is contrary to scientific evidence. Myth or reality, these anxieties and fears are painfully real, and they are a consequence of the testing programme.

The atoll groups most directly affected by ionizing radiation, each of which has had a particular claim before the United States Government through legal channels, need to be understood before there can be any clarity regarding the divisions, as well as the needs, of the people, and the current effects of radiation on their lives :

- a) The Bikini people (now living on Kili, 500 miles southeast of the Bikini atoll) seemed adamant and single-minded that their home island must be cleaned up and made inhabitable by the United States Government. They are culturally, emotionally, and historically tied to their land : an incomplete, unhappy people removed from it. They were evacuated thirty-seven years ago and now compare themselves to “something floating on the water, looking for a place to land”, or “the children of Israel, waiting to go to the Promised Land”. They feel betrayed by the US Government and insist that the USA must, however belatedly, keep its initial promise to return them to their island “in a short while”. As evidenced by the US attempts at decontaminating Enewetok, the clean-up of Bikini would be very costly and limited in its effectiveness. Bikinians, however, cannot believe that the USA is unable to clean-up Bikini. “The USA landed on the moon. The USA can destroy the world in thirty minutes”, they argue. “Why can’t they clean-up Bikini ?” But they were told by an American official : “No... Can you peel the water out of the Atlantic ?”
- b) The people from the Enewetok atoll perceive that the scientists are giving them incorrect and conflicting messages. They have been told that they can return to their island (as many of them have), yet as they look at what is happening to their people, they fear that the island is really not safe. They live with the reality of what they call “the tomb”, where the wastes cleaned up from Enewetok Island have been buried in a huge cement-domed pit on the island of Runit — a part of the Enewetok atoll. There are also three other islands which have been completely destroyed and are no longer even visible. Obviously, the island of Runit is not useable. The Enewetok people insist on heavy reparations payments from the USA, with the possibility of themselves controlling and investing that money. They feel that their way of life has been wrested from them and will accept money in large amounts as inadequate, though the only possible compensation for what they have suffered.
- c) The Rongelap people, fallout victims of a 1954 blast, are deeply troubled by an inadequate supply of edible (uncontaminated) local food. They are now living on their island, but several of the islands in the atoll have been declared “off limits” by the US Department of Energy (DOE), and they fear that their children will be

affected from eating contaminated foods. Birth defects have become a source of deep anxiety and we found the people to be discouraged and cynical about their future.

- d) The Utirik people received less fallout, and therefore feel left out of the "benefits" of compensation. They expressed grave concern about health care for all Marshallese people. They are angry both at the level of health care provided and over the fact that the DOE has defined health effects of radiation from nuclear testing so narrowly that compensation is excluded for many health problems that the Marshallese are convinced stem from exposure to radiation.

2. RADIATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The radiation question is a difficult one, even for scientists who have been working with it for many years. Many dedicated US scientists have been involved in an extensive effort over many years to assess and treat the effects of radiation exposure of Marshallese and to monitor the residual radioactivity contaminating many of the islands in the northern atolls. It would appear that they have performed with honesty, and in most cases, particularly in recent years, with a reasonable level of competence. Nevertheless, it is always possible to identify areas where more attention should have been focused. Two such areas which have become critically important are :

- a) the education of the Marshallese on the nature of radiation and its human and environmental effect, and
- b) providing adequate medical care and compensation for victims of the atomic bomb tests.

Related to the first area, the recent US Department of Energy books on the radioactive contamination of Enewetok, Bikini and the northern atolls have been almost totally ineffective, and in some instances, counterproductive in explaining the nature of radiation and the effects of the residual radioactive contamination on human health. These books have been ineffective even though written in Marshallese and English and clearly aimed at a lay audience. Most Marshallese simply cannot understand the text. Moreover, the presentation of the results in terms of "the average risk of dying of cancer" (perhaps presented this way in an effort to simplify the issue) tends to mask the variability of the data and its uncertainties, making the results misleading.

With regard to the second area, the US medical surveillance programme, conducted by Brookhaven National Laboratory under DOE contract, is a narrowly focused research effort to identify the late effects of radiation on the most heavily exposed Marshallese people. The treatment by the USA of radiation-induced health effects and compensation for these effects have been largely but not totally limited to those effects which have been clearly identified by the surveillance programme as being radiation-induced, i.e. mainly thyroid abnormalities among those most heavily exposed to the fallout from the 1954 Bravo test. Health effects that have not been statistically linked to radiation in the Marshallese population under study are generally not treated (exceptions have been made but generally these have not been in accord with Brookhaven's contract with DOE) and the victims are not compensated. In effect, the burden of proof lies not with the USA to demonstrate the disease is *not* radiation-induced, but with the victim to demonstrate that it *was*.

The US Government — and perhaps the United Nations — should reconsider whether the medical surveillance programme should be so narrowly defined; whether the people in the surveillance programme who have been categorized as “unexposed controls” should be so categorized; and whether the level of compensation and the people who qualify for it are appropriately defined.

There is widespread distrust by Marshallese of US scientists involved in radiation monitoring and health surveillance programmes. Among the Marshallese who are participants in the Brookhaven surveillance programme, some have even said, “the Marshallese are being used as guinea pigs”, and that the fallout from the 1954 Bravo test was not an accident. We did not share this view. Unfortunately, the scientists working today are forced to carry the baggage of mistakes and changes in policy accumulated over the past 37 years. We heard ulterior motives attributed to the DOE’s educational efforts regarding residual radiation. Some charge that scientists are giving conflicting messages. These are strong, perhaps even paranoid statements. But though they may be difficult to accept, they must be seen for their significance in the cynicism and frustration which they reflect.

The problem of the primary contaminated atolls, Bikini and Enewetok, is deeply troubling. A serious clean-up attempt is being made at Enewetok, at a reported expenditure of US\$ 218 million. In the light of the drastic measures and unusual lifestyle required for resettlement, it is not yet clear if many of the people will choose to return. Bikini poses a more difficult case than Enewetok, and thus far the US Government has taken the position that clean-up would be too expensive. It would seem that a profound moral and legal question is posed here for the global community. Who is to decide upon such weighty matters of land abuse and restoration? While even a very imperfect clean-up at Bikini could cost several hundred million dollars, some Marshallese pointed out that the US Government is spending much more than that amount on just a few weapons, such as the MX missiles now being tested at Kwajalein. At one meeting an articulate young man asked, “Why can the USA do whatever it chooses?”

3. HEALTH CONCERNS

Nearly everyone with whom we spoke felt that the Marshall Islands has serious, unique health problems and inadequate care (the lack of health care facilities is obvious even to the casual observer); that all of the people should be given comprehensive health care regardless of whether they have been categorized as “exposed” or “unexposed”; that the new Marshall Islands Government does not have adequate capacity to do this; that it is therefore the responsibility of the US Government not only to provide funding, but to ensure by all reasonable means that such care is made available.

A persistent message throughout the trip was expressed in this way: “The USA has a continuing responsibility for health care. The USA never did establish adequate health care, and consequently there was no health care programme to turn over to the Marshall Islands Government.

The inadequacy of nationwide comparative health surveys makes it difficult to assess the broad effect of the nuclear testing programme on the people. It is indeed difficult scientifically to link the nuclear testing programme with health effects in the so-called “non-exposed areas”. This is due in part to the lack of careful monitoring of health over the entire Marshalls. In our opinion, the Northern Marshalls Radiological Survey, while

done with a high level of technical competence and at great cost, is presented in such a way as to downplay the seriousness of the radiation problem.

It is clear that the people themselves generally believe that the effects are broad and serious. Marshallese government officials expressed to us their conviction that the Marshalls have the highest thyroid and other cancer rates in the whole Pacific, and that this cannot be explained simply with reference to the large number of cases from the "exposed" group. The incidence of thyroid abnormalities is unusually high also among Marshallese classified by the DOE as "non-exposed".

The hospitals and clinics are grossly inadequate and poorly supplied with required medicines. Commitment has not been demonstrated for the training of Marshallese medical professionals. We consistently heard of the difficulty in getting health records from the US Government for "exposed" individuals. An American physician with considerable experience in the Marshalls levelled sharp criticism about this and about the lack of follow-up health care for victims.

Not surprisingly, anxiety and fear are pervasive. There exists a substantial psychological health issue, with an extreme example to be found at Rongelap. The "jellyfish babies" phenomenon was regularly reported in the Northern Marshalls as one of the effects of ionizing radiation. It is said that an unusual number of women give birth prematurely to babies that resemble jellyfish with strange growths. These might be hydatidiform moles or chromosomal or other anomalies incompatible with normal foetal development, though found throughout the world. It is difficult to demonstrate that these are radiation-induced, all the more so as traditional beliefs and practices hamper adequate documentation of the nature and frequency of such phenomena.

In addition to the physical and psychological problems caused by ionizing radiation, the burgeoning population growth of the Marshalls adds to the already overwhelming challenge of providing adequate health care. Rapidly expanding populations in the major centres, particularly Majuro and Ebeye, place unusual strains upon health and sanitation provisions. Ebeye has been described by some as a "biological time bomb". More than fifty percent of the population is under 15 years of age. The total Marshall Islands population projected for 1990 is 42,500, an increase of almost 25% in less than a decade!

4. KWAJALEIN LIFESTYLE AND US SECURITY NEEDS

At a most basic level, this situation must be seen as one of the many tragic effects of the arms race. It was the US perception of its own security needs which was the driving force behind the testing programme and the way in which the new political arrangements are now evolving. While the US would clearly like to resolve and be free from the ubiquitous problems and unfortunate colonial image associated with the Pacific Island Trust Territory, its currently perceived military requirements compel it to prolong its presence and control.

Kwajalein reminded us with a jolt that strange things can happen when two "worlds" intersect — in this case, when the security needs of a powerful nation cut sharply across the life situation of a weak one.

Comprised of 90 small islands encircling what is said to be the largest lagoon in the world, the Kwajalein Atoll is the target area for the testing of US intercontinental missiles, which are launched from Vandenberg Airforce Base in California. The USA considers this missile range to be a vital interest, having invested more than a billion US dollars there, and expecting to continue testing of various future missile systems there, including the MX (now named "Peacekeeper"). The base, which is headquartered at the largest island, called Kwajalein Island, is also an important military re-fuelling station, and an electronic base forming part of the US anti-satellite warfare system.

We passed through Kwajalein Island four times, twice to go in and out of Ebeye, the small island where most of the Marshallese of Kwajalein Atoll now live, and twice for a day's trip to the Rongelap Atoll. The military base officials seemed not particularly pleased at the visit of a World Council of Churches' delegation, and each passage through the base was politely but thoroughly controlled.

We could not but contemplate, while waiting about six hours for the delayed plane to Rongelap in a frigidly air-conditioned security room under armed guard, in a country where the local people's language has no word for "enemy", what strange intersections are to be experienced here.

The 67-acre Ebeye Island, where more than 8,000 Marshallese live, contrasts harshly with the 735-acre Kwajalein Island, home of approximately 2,500 Americans, complete with golf course and parks, bowling alleys, theatres and swimming pools.

Our first arrival at Kwajalein had been at the end of the Memorial Day weekend, when a number of festivities had been arranged. For the added enjoyment of the approximately 2,500 Kwajalein residents, a complete McDonalds hamburger operation had been transported from Honolulu, with enough supplies to make 15,000 "Big Macs". Ronald McDonald the clown had come along, and as we left the Kwajalein pier on our way to Ebeye, Ronald was just returning from Ebeye in his US Coast Guard speedboat, where as a gesture of good will he had distributed 3,000 McDonalds' cookies.

There was no way we could have known that day when we waited so long to go to Rongelap that our plane was to be so late. Even though Americans living at Kwajalein can dial direct to the USA, there is no telephone service across the three miles of lagoon from Ebeye to Kwajalein.

Two worlds of time intersect : Because of its function as a US military base, the date of this beautiful spot in the Pacific has simply been defined to conform with that in the USA. Each time we entered and left, we had to change our calendar by one day.

At the end of Kwajalein Island facing Ebeye, when travelling back and forth from their largely menial jobs, the approximately 600 Marshallese working daily at Kwajalein can see the razor-sharp barbed wire (called "concertina wire") and the flood-lights. We were told that these were installed after last year's sit-in demonstration of former residents (see Director's Introduction), to prevent the "adversary" from entering at night.

A continuing point of friction between these worlds is the question of emergency medical help for Marshallese, since their hospital (actually, a large clinic) is so grossly inadequate. Base officials contend that emergency help is always available upon certification by the doctor at Ebeye, but that this "privilege" is often abused. It is also said

that cases are often brought in too late! Marshallese claim that the procedures are difficult and arbitrary, that patients are made to feel like second-class human beings. Examples were cited to us of Americans flown to Honolulu for a toothache.

But for all its lacks, Ebeye does have television — one of the few places in the Pacific Islands to enjoy that dubious opportunity! Ebeye residents, being near the base, despite their tightly circumscribed lives, live constantly with the entertainment and the messages of modern America.

Just before leaving Kwajalein, sitting across the table from Col. John Banks, Commander of the base, we were made acutely aware of the chasm of difference between those who fiercely believe that they are called to defend “freedom” and those who believe that they have no enemies.

The Kwajalein people, most of them now living in crowded, dismal conditions on Ebeye Island, are seeking, thus far unsuccessfully, to attain a measure of restoration to their land, which is being used as part of the missile testing range. The determination of the Kwajalein people, working through an organization known as The Kwajalein Atoll Corporation, is a remarkable story in itself. The Kwajalein people will without doubt play a key role in this continuing debate.

5. THE LEGAL STRUGGLE

Lawyers and the litigation to pursue health damage and land claims have become a significant, often troubling political factor. Some five major litigation projects are in progress to press health, land and other claims resulting from the US nuclear testing programme. It is not likely that this will end, even now that the “Compact of Free Association”, which defines a special continuing relationship with the USA and includes provisions for the termination of litigation, has been approved.

The litigation projects have generated a great deal of discussion, travel and strategizing. Indeed, it might be said that lawyers have become prime actors in the political education process. The lawyers and litigation are, of course, one of the many consequences of the testing programme. We met a number of thoughtful persons who were deeply troubled by this. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be much co-ordination between the groups in litigation.

Are the people being exploited in new ways through the lawyers, even as they deal with older injustices? Have the lawyers put the Marshall Island Government in a difficult position, as contended by one high level official? Is there an unfortunate “pull” towards money solutions, or compensation, rather than long-term restoration of the basic relationships between the people and their land and culture? This may be true. But the lawyers have also brought these greatly disadvantaged people a new means of much-needed power, and it would be most unwise to jeopardize this by attacking their sensitive lawyer-client relationship.

6. THE CHURCH IN THE MARSHALLS

It is one thing to read the specific events of history; it is quite another to experience the effects of those events, even for so short a time as two weeks. As church people travelling under the auspices of the World Council of Churches, we were especially concerned with

the quality of life and the overall effects of radiation on the lives of the Marshallese people. We recognized immediately that the church is important to nearly every Marshallese person, providing cherished comfort and much needed hope for the people. Many of our meetings were in church buildings; nearly every meeting was in the presence of church-related individuals. The church in the Marshall Islands has played and will likely continue to play a nurturing and comforting, rather than an advocacy role.

In this fragmented society, the church is a relatively strong, self-reliant indigenous institution, where people can come together in spite of their divisions. In communities where virtually all persons belong to the church, and where virtually all members of the local government councils are church people, it is the custom to speak on political and economic matters through civic channels.

While we have regretted that a clear, official church statement has not come forward from the Marshalls on these concerns, many church people have spoken out, and we must trust the churches of the Marshalls to find their own appropriate official way of response.

We were at all times made to feel that the concern represented by the visit was much needed and deeply appreciated. The Marshallese people want the world to know what has happened to them. They want the whole Church to pray for them and to speak out on their behalf: for their health and welfare, their long-term security, their independence and integrity as a people.

7. CRITICAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- a) While this report is openly critical of US policy and practice in the Marshall Islands, we must point out that this situation is in a deep sense just a part of the wider problem of the global arms race. The alleviation of the difficulties of the Marshallese people will depend largely upon reducing the need for continued strategic weapons tests. Our response as a global church must be seen in relation to the biblical mandate for peacemaking.
- b) Ordinary people in the Marshall Islands consistently told us that the regional and world church must continue to make people more aware of what is happening there. The churches should continue to play a responsible role in strengthening the accountability of the United States and the United Nations for what is happening in the Pacific Island Trust Territory. We should continue to seek guidance from the churches of the Marshalls in fulfilling this role.
- c) Long-term questions of political status are especially critical at this moment in history. Unresolved health, land and economic problems will tend to influence long-term political decisions. It is important that there be a maximum of open public discussion on the proposed new political status. The churches, both within and outside of the Marshalls, should seek to play a constructive role in this process, particularly in raising the question of values.
- d) In light of serious, unique health problems, a much higher level of health care is needed for the Marshall Islands, for the whole population, and on a continuing basis. Consultation is needed to determine potentially effective ways for promoting

this. A Marshalls government-endorsed independent medical survey might be helpful in moving more decisively toward adequate comprehensive health care for all Marshallese.

- e) Profound moral and legal questions are raised in the matter of the radiation-contaminated atolls. Who shall decide, and upon what basis, whether or not they should be "cleaned"? It would seem appropriate for the churches to project such questions, even if final action would seem totally dependent upon US willingness to respond.
- f) The Marshallese people will be living with the reality of ionizing radiation for a long time to come. Efforts to educate them about it are extremely important. Thus far, however, such efforts have not been effective. It appears that the level of trust for the US Department of Energy is so low that this educational task should be taken up by some other, more trusted group.
- g) A serious lack of technical information exists in the Marshalls about the radiation problem. It would seem important that the US Government make an unreserved effort to supply a basic library and file of technical reports and papers, accessible to interested persons and groups, for which the Marshall Islands Government should serve as custodian.
- h) In no way should the effectiveness of the lawyers be jeopardized in seeking to bring a greater measure of justice to Marshallese groups engaged in litigation against the US Government for health, environmental and other claims. At the same time, it might be helpful for the Marshall Islands Government to establish guidelines for lawyers, in the interest of the Marshallese groups, including guidelines for lawyer's fees.
- i) Since the sit-in demonstration last year at Kwajalein ("Operation Homecoming"), the Kwajalein Missile Range Base officials have taken an unnecessarily harsh line against the Marshallese community at Ebeye. We would hope that even though many of the basic, long-term questions have not been resolved, the people, as the rightful owners of Kwajalein, will be treated with dignity and respect, that Base officials will give serious consideration to their complaints, and neither limit nor withhold essential services.

IF YOU THINK BIKINI IS JUST A BATHING SUIT...

by Kara L. Cole

(First published in *Quaker Life*, July-August 1983, p. 24)

It's an event long since forgotten by most people — the atomic bomb dropped on Bikini Island in July of 1946. The 167 residents of the island (one of several islands comprising Bikini Atoll, one of 26 atolls and 5 islands which comprise the Marshall Islands) had been convinced that their evacuation of their island would be temporary, perhaps a few months, at most a year. They were told that their sacrifice would allow the USA to test this powerful weapon “for the good of mankind and to end all world wars”. The Bikini people have yet to return to their island. They now live on Kili, a small, previously uninhabited single island which has no lagoon, making fishing difficult at best and impossible several months each year when the ocean is rough. The Bikini event was only the first of over 100 tests of atomic and nuclear bombs in the Pacific region, which is still a major test area for the USA, as well as for the French and British.

Perhaps the most dramatic of these was the “Bravo” test, a hydrogen bomb dropped on Bikini in 1954. Unexpected winds carried major fallout over a wide area of populated islands and severely contaminated several of the Northern Marshall atolls. The inhabitants of these atolls are dealing with the health, social and cultural effects of that “accident” to this day.

The Marshallese are a proud people, struggling to be modern on their own terms. They are a Christian people, having been introduced to the Christian gospel in the mid-1800's by Congregationalists, and later by Roman Catholics. The Marshall Islands are one of four administrative districts of Micronesia, (Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands), the others being Palau, Marianas, and the Federated States of Micronesia (which include Yap, Truk, Ponape and Kosrae).

Entrusted to the USA by the United Nations in 1947, Micronesia was designated a “strategic” trust, because of its security significance. The Marshallese are becoming modern, but in a difficult and somewhat unplanned way. Today, the relationship of the Marshallese people to the USA is one of need and dependency, rather than of co-operation and mutual negotiation. To document how that relationship has developed would take many pages. It has already been done.¹

1. *Micronesia : Trust Betrayed*, by Donald F. McHenry, Carnegie Endowment, 1975, among others.

The primary as well as the secondary effects of radiation are everywhere evident in the Marshall Islands. A people who have for generations fished from the lagoons, now eat canned fish. They gather other food from tins marked USDA, rather than from breadfruit, coconut and pandanus trees. We found very little interest in independence because most people are convinced that independence from the USA will only free them of US money but not from the US military presence and activity.

We went to the Marshall Islands as Christians, as church people seeking to express our Christian mutuality which knows no political or social barriers. We were welcomed in that spirit by loving people renowned for their hospitality and generosity, a people who have been visited, observed, examined and tested by many official delegations of the USA and the United Nations since 1946. I am sure that in many ways we were just another delegation, to be fed, welcomed, sung to, and showered with gifts. Still they were gracious. They answered our questions and posed many of their own. They shared with us their fears for a desolate future, their anger and cynicism at the way they have been treated, their distrust of certain US Government representatives, their determination to make the USA provide "adequate" compensation.

What is the role of the church in this difficult situation? Certainly, the people expressed to us their understanding that the church *is* involved. Each week, prayers are offered and there are reminders of their spiritual connections to Christians elsewhere, including those in the USA. Activism and advocacy as US churches practice them are absent in the function of Marshallese Protestant and Catholic churches alike. On the other hand, virtually everyone is an active Christian, which means that a political meeting involves the same persons who attended church for spiritual nurture just a few hours or days before. We began to ask ourselves, how does the church do its best work in this culture? By the end of our visit, we understood that the church as a sanctuary for spiritual nurture was a valid work unto itself.

And, each of us came to a new understanding that Christians everywhere have a responsibility, indeed a privilege: to learn about and work on behalf of our sisters and brothers — the island peoples of the Marshalls.

THE MARSHALL ISLANDS : FROM SELF-RELIANCE TO COMPACT OF FREE ASSOCIATION

by B. David Williams

The Marshall Islands are found at the eastern edge of Micronesia, approximately 3,200 km west of Hawaii, and consist of 1,152 low coral islands and islets totalling only about 180 square kilometers (about 70 square miles) in area.

A single indigenous language exists in the Marshalls, with two mutually intelligible dialects. The ancestors of today's Marshallese population of about 33,000 were expert canoe builders, navigators and sailors. They travelled widely from their small, self-reliant communities, and to this day strong ties remain with Kiribati, Nauru and certain atolls of Ponape and Truk. An important, strong feature of Marshallese society is its land-holding system, which is integrally related to the lineage and kinship system and to the political and economic relations among individuals and groups.

The Marshallese have experienced four foreign rulers. *Spain* maintained nominal control from the late 1600's. Traders and missionaries were well-established throughout most of Micronesia by the latter 1800's. Along with most of the rest of Micronesia, *Germany* seized the Marshalls from Spain in 1899. At the outbreak of World War I, *Japan* took control of the entire area now known as the Pacific Island Trust Territory. Though after the war Japan controlled them under a League of Nations mandate, they were administered as though an integral part of Japan. During this period extensive economic development took place, and there were large, flourishing Japanese communities. By 1938 almost 58% of Micronesia's population was composed of Japanese settlers, who were primary beneficiaries of development. It was from Micronesia that Japan launched its attack on Pearl Harbor. The *United States* captured the islands from Japan in World War II in bitterly contested battles. It is estimated that more than 5,000 Micronesians lost their lives in this war which they did not want and from which they did not benefit.

The USA continues to administer this area, including the Marshall Islands, under a United Nations mandate called a "Strategic Trust". Under the terms of the Trust, signed in 1947, the USA was permitted strategic control and military use, and became obligated :

- a) to guide the territory toward self-government or independence;
- b) to promote the economic advancement and self-sufficiency of the inhabitants;
- c) to protect their health; and
- d) to protect them against the loss of their lands and resources.

The approximate first fifteen years of US administration are notable in the fact that while the human communities were largely ignored, the US Department of Defence undertook a massive programme consisting of 66 large atomic and hydrogen bomb tests at Bikini and Enewetok atolls, with an operations centre and missile test range at Kwajalein. The tests and their human consequences have become a pivotal reality in Marshallese history.

Along with the other states of the Trust Territory, the Marshall Islands are moving towards a new political status. In March 1979, the people approved a constitution which came into effect on 1 May 1979, and in May 1982, the new Government formally declared the nation to be "the Republic of the Marshall Islands", in preparation for the new status.

As a further step in the process of USA-Micronesian negotiations, which have been going on for approximately 13 years, the Marshalls President, Amata Kabua, and his ministers, have endorsed a proposed "Compact of Free Association", which defines a special continuing relationship with the United States.

The Free Association status, as defined by the Compact and its subsidiary agreements, include provision for :

- a) local self-government;
- b) a guaranteed level of US assistance for 15 years;
- c) preferential treatment of Marshallese with respect to US immigration laws;
- d) final resolution of all claims against the USA for health damages and loss of land due to the atomic testing programme;
- e) continued use of some islands for the testing of missiles; and
- f) final US authority over all matters which might have implications for the security of the region.

Having been endorsed by the President and his ministers, the Compact won the approval of about 58% of those voting in the plebiscite held on 7 September 1982.

While the northern atoll groups (essentially those engaged in litigation projects) were largely opposed to the Compact, there was considerable support at Majuro, the Republic's capital, where a large concentration of population is found, and where the government campaigned heavily. Opposition to the Compact must not be construed as a "pro-independence" position. On two occasions we had contact with representatives of the "Voice of the Marshalls" group, which is opposed to the Compact and in favour of Commonwealth status, a position involving even closer ties with the USA. It was not possible for us to get a sense of how widely this view is shared. One does not hear loud expressions of support for complete independence. It would seem that the "agenda" is still too laden with unresolved issues and needs, so that any status which would make the US Government more "distant" to deal with is at this time not attractive.

The new Compact of Free Association contains a number of points that raise serious concerns not only about the limits of Marshallese self-determination, but also about the militarization and environmental threats of the entire Pacific community. The following are some of the problematic sections of the Compact :

Section 161 : The President of the USA may exempt any of the activities of the US Government from any environmental standard or procedure if it is considered to be in

the paramount interest of the USA to do so.

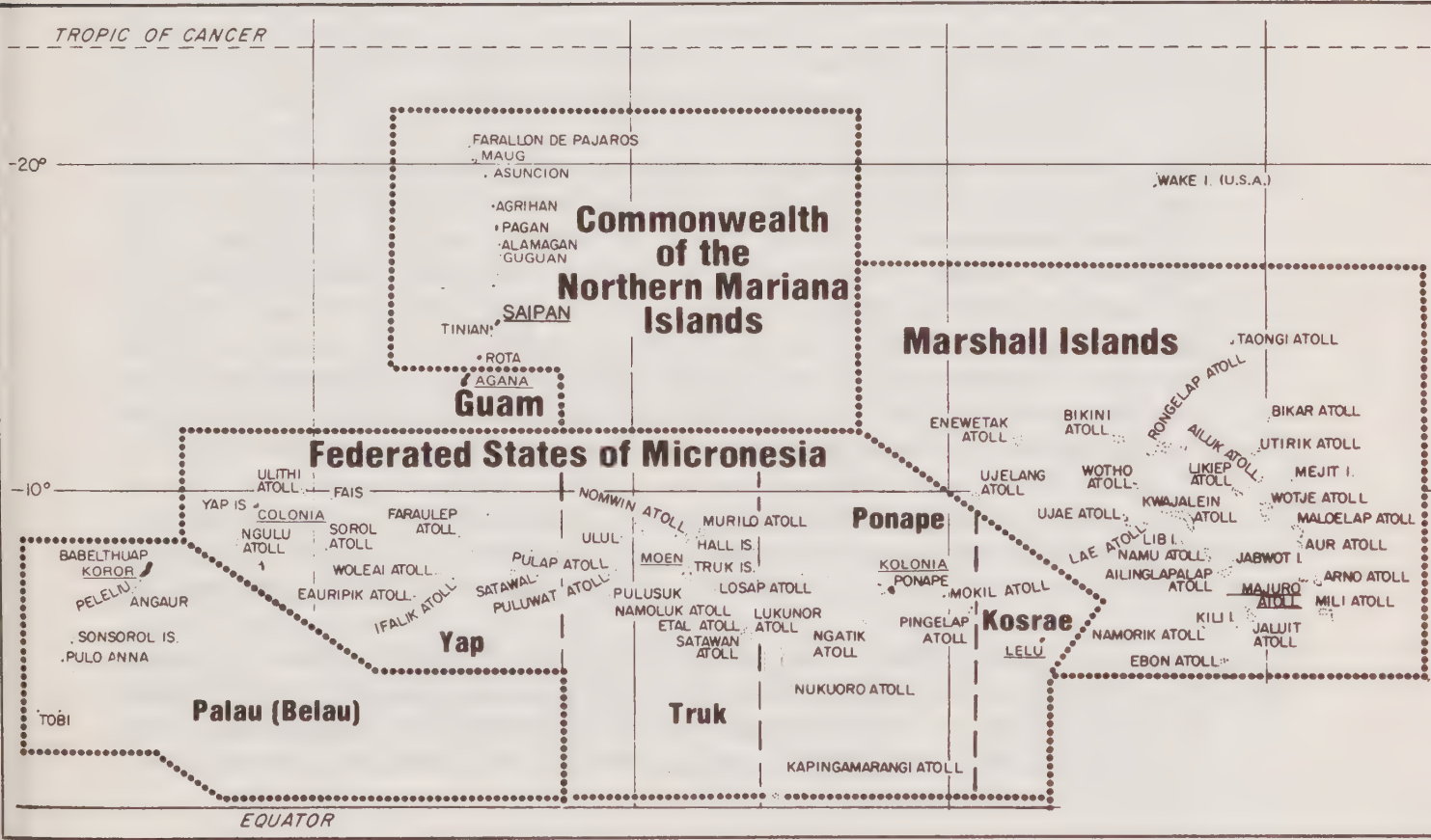
Section 163a: While the Government of the Marshall Islands may have access to US facilities for information, the US Government will make the final decision as to what constitutes “unreasonable interference”, regardless of the importance such information may have for the Marshall Islands.

Section 177, Articles VII, IX and X: The USA is relieved of any further responsibility for the lands affected by the nuclear testing programme and for health damages to the people, except for the “assistance” outlined in the Compact. While it is stated that damages may be requested at some time in the future if the provisions of the Compact are shown to be “manifestly inadequate”, the agreement is to constitute “full settlement of all claims, past, present and future” in relation to the nuclear testing programme. All legal proceedings are to be terminated, and no US court shall have jurisdiction to entertain such claims.

Section 313: The USA can veto any activity or action of the Government of the Marshalls, including business agreements or treaties with foreign countries, which may be interpreted to be in conflict with US military authority.

Sections 453 and 454: Appear to be leading the Marshall Islands into unusually long-term military use by the USA, well beyond the initial 15 year period of the Compact. Military use and denial provisions are not linked with that period of time.

Map taken from *From Trusteeship To...? Micronesia And Its Future*, a joint publication of the Micronesia Support Committee and Pacific Concerns Resource Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, August 1982.



THE BOMB AND THE PEOPLE OF ENEWETOK AND BIKINI

by Thomas B. Cochran

In the weeks following the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II, American military and political leaders began planning nuclear weapon experiments to test weapon effects and new designs. A pair of tests, code-named "Operation Crossroads", was initially planned to test the effects of atomic weapons against naval vessels, and in November 1945, a search for a test site began. In late January 1946, the US Navy announced that Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands met all their requirements, including :

"a site within the control of the USA, uninhabited or subject to evacuation without unnecessary hardship on large numbers of inhabitants, ... offering a protected anchorage at least six miles in diameter..."¹

Christianity, which islanders had accepted from American missionaries, was used to convince the Bikinian paramount chief to temporarily relocate his people.

"The Bikinians' initial relocation was accomplished swiftly and with little planning. The military governor of the Marshalls obtained the consent of the Bikinians' paramount chief to move his subjects. On Sunday, 10 February 1946, the governor, members of his staff, and the paramount chief arrived at Bikini by seaplane. After the morning church services had been concluded, the Bikinians were addressed by the governor. According to his own account, he drew upon the Bible and 'compared the Bikinians to the children of Israel whom the Lord saved from their enemy and led unto the Promised Land. He told them of the bomb that men in America had made and the destruction it had wrought upon the enemy'."²

"He further explained that scientists were experimenting with nuclear devices... for the good of mankind and to end all world wars, and told how the navy had searched the world for a test site and had determined that Bikini was the best."

"The Bikinians deliberated, and according to the governor's description of events, chief Juda reported their decision : 'If the US Government and the scientists of the world want to use our island and atoll for furthering development, which with God's blessing will result in kindness and benefit to all mankind, my people will be pleased to go elsewhere'."³

According to Kiste, it is doubtful that the Bikinians believed that they had any alternative but to comply.⁴ The Bikini people chose temporarily to resettle on nearby Rongerik Atoll, 125 miles to the east, having been led to believe that they would be returned after the tests. Rongerik's 17 islands barely contain 0.5 square miles of dry land surrounding a 55 square mile lagoon, compared to 2.3 square miles of land and 300 square miles of lagoon at Bikini.

In July 1947, the USA announced that it was establishing a proving ground in the Pacific for routine testing of atomic weapons. Enewetok Atoll, consisting of some 46 islands (2.75 square miles of dry land) surrounding a 388 square mile lagoon, was selected. A return to Bikini was apparently not contemplated. Bikini was not considered acceptable at the time, since it lacked sufficient land area for necessary instrumentation.⁵ In fact, following the first two post-war nuclear tests in 1946 (Operation Crossroads), Bikini was not to be used again for nuclear testing until 1954.

Following approval of the Enewetok site by President Truman on 2 December 1947, the USA moved swiftly to evict the 145 inhabitants. In fact, on the same day, the USA notified the UN Security Council that, pursuant to the Trusteeship Agreement, Enewetok Atoll was closed for security reasons. On 3 December 1947, the Governor of the Marshalls flew to Enewetok to "propose" to the two Enewetok chiefs that they move to Ujelang, an atoll with only one-third the land area of Enewetok and a lagoon less than one-tenth that of Enewetok's. Temporary living quarters were established on Ujelang and the Enewetok people went ashore on 21 December 1947, less than 3 weeks after the Enewetok site was selected.

Three nuclear tests were conducted at Enewetok between 14 April and 14 May 1948, in "Operation Sandstone".⁶ The next series of tests was conducted at Enewetok in "Operation Greenhouse" during April and May 1951, when four more devices, with yields in the range of 47 to 215 kilotons were deployed. Tests "Mike" (10.4 megatons) and "King" (500 kilotons) were conducted during the fall of 1952. "Mike" was the first successful thermonuclear device tested by the USA. Island Flora (Elugelab) was selected for the test; a crater in the reef about one mile across and 180 feet deep now marks the spot where Flora used to be.

The next test series in the Pacific, "Operation Castle", involved only one test at Enewetok and five other large-yield tests at Bikini, including the ill-fated test "Bravo", a 15 megaton thermonuclear device — the most powerful bomb detonated by the USA until that time.

Testing of nuclear weapons and other devices by the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom had, by 1956, produced worldwide concern about the hazards created by radioactive fallout. Reacting to public criticism, the USA and the USSR negotiated a moratorium on testing that was set to commence on 31 October 1958. The United States, anticipating the possibility of a halt to testing, assembled a large array of devices to be tested before the start of the moratorium, including 22 tests at Enewetok, 10 at Bikini, 2 in the Johnston Atoll area, and one at 86,000 feet above the sea between Enewetok and Bikini. By the time the test moratorium became effective, the USA had conducted 43 tests at Enewetok and 23 at Bikini.

Plight of the Bikini People

Rongerik Atoll, where the Bikinians were first relocated, was previously uninhabited, perhaps due to the poor quality of its coconuts and unusable well water. The Bikinians experienced food shortages in late 1946 and early 1947. Fire damaged 30% of the productive coconut trees in the summer of 1947. Evidence during the following year that Bikinians are “visibly suffering from malnutrition” resulted in Navy plans to evacuate the Bikinians from Rongerik to Ujelang. This move was aborted when it was hastily decided to relocate the Enewetok people at Ujelang. Medical evidence in early 1948 that the Bikinians were starving resulted in the temporary relocation of the Bikinians at the US Navy Base at Kwajalein. After a seven-month stay at Kwajalein, the Bikinians were moved again — this time to Kili Island. Kili is only 0.36 square miles (230 acres or less than one-sixth the land area of Bikini) and has no lagoon. It has a good stand of coconuts, but is lacking in other food crops. More important, since it has no lagoon, rough surf most of the year brings fishing to a halt and isolates the island.

In January 1951, a 40-foot ship provided for the Bikinians by the US administration was washed into the Kili reef by heavy surf and sank with a full load of copra. Rough seas and shortage of vessels caused food supplies to run critically low on several other occasions during the 1950s and early 1960s. In November 1956, representatives of the Bikinians signed an agreement relinquishing to the USA “full use rights to Bikini Atoll” and received as compensation “full use rights” to Kili and several islands in Jaluit, US\$ 25,000 in cash, and a US\$ 300,000 trust fund (producing an interest income of about US\$ 15 per person per year) to be divided among the Bikinians on Kili.

In the mid-1960s, the US Government began to consider the possibility of returning the Bikinians to their homeland, and by late 1969, a limited radiological clean-up and resettlement of Bikini was planned. The “clean-up”, which took place in the same year, was limited to “removal of all test-related debris” with disposal at sea (three dump sites less than a mile offshore) of all radioactive debris. The rehabilitation programme, which included replanting of coconuts at Bikini and Eneu islands, proceeded slowly. The US Atomic Energy Commission announced in 1972 that restrictions would have to be placed on food-gathering due to the high levels of radioactivity at Bikini. Due to the residual radioactive contamination, the Bikinians’ council voted not to return to Bikini as a group, but not to prevent individuals from returning. Three families moved back to Bikini in the same year.

Regular monitoring of Bikini and its newly returned inhabitants showed in 1975 that radioactive contamination levels in food and drinking water were higher than previously anticipated. As a consequence of a lawsuit filed by the Bikinians in a US federal court, the USA agreed to conduct a more thorough scientific survey of the radiation levels on Bikini and the other northern Marshall Islands. In 1977, the US Department of Energy (DOE) concluded that “all living patterns involving Bikini Island [a principal island of the Bikini Atoll] exceed federal (radiation) guidelines...” In the same year, US scientists recorded an eleven-fold increase in the cesium-137 body burden in the 130 people living in Bikini, to a level that was unacceptably high, *i.e.*, above US and international radiation protection standards. In the following year, the 139 inhabitants of Bikini were evacuated and resettled, primarily on Majuro Atoll. Based on more recent radiological surveys, DOE officials concluded in 1979 that, without additional clean-up, Bikini Island could not be resettled for another 30 to 60 years. The island of Eneu in the Bikini Atoll would also have to be placed off limits for another 20 to 25 years.

In 1980, the Bikinians were informed by DOE that, if they returned to Eneu and relied in part on imported food, their radiation doses would be within US radiation protection limits. To date, however, the US Government has not recommended resettlement of Eneu or Bikini for fear of another miscalculation. Today the Bikinians still reside on Kili (approximately 500 persons) and on a small island near the Majuro district centre (reportedly about 12 families).

Plight of the Enewetok People

During the first twenty years of exile (1947-1967), the Enewetok people faced harsh living conditions on Ujelang. Field production was reduced. In October 1967, a Trust Territory supply ship arrived at Ujelang to find the people with no copra to sell and no money to buy needed food and supplies. Almost all of the population (by then nearly 300) demanded to leave. Reacting to protests by the Enewetok people regarding the near starvation conditions on Ujelang, the US Congress established in August 1969 a trust fund of US\$ 1 million for the Enewetok people.

The last nuclear test at Enewetok occurred in August 1958. During the 1960s, Enewetok became the target area for tests of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and a test site for rocket engines. By the end of the 1960s, a limited radiological clean-up had been completed on Bikini Atoll, with the resettlement of Bikini contemplated. In 1972, with only two military test programmes still scheduled at Enewetok, the USA began planning for radiological clean-up activities at Enewetok. Initiation of the first of several extensive radiological surveys of Enewetok began in 1972. Radiological clean-up guidelines were established following publication of a Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement in September 1974 and April 1975 respectively. The residual contamination levels (*i.e.*, the clean-up criteria and the disposition of plutonium contaminated soil) were challenged by some members (a minority) of the scientific community. Actual clean-up activities at Enewetok did not begin until May 1977 and were completed in 1980.

As a consequence of the nuclear testing at Enewetok, two islands no longer exist and only a small portion of three others remain. In addition, two nuclear weapon safety tests in 1958 were responsible for spreading unfissioned plutonium over a large area of Runit Island. Bits of plutonium metal with centimeter range dimensions were discovered during radiological surveys 14 years later.

In March 1980, the US Defence Nuclear Agency announced that the clean-up of Enewetok was complete. The total cost of the clean-up and the rehabilitation phase was US\$ 218 million. In December 1980, the Enewetok people, now numbering about 500, returned to the southern islands of their homeland.

According to the final Enewetok Master Plan, permanent habitation would be confined to the southern sector of the atoll. Enjebi Atoll would remain unsafe for habitation for another 30 years. Runit Island was to be quarantined to all inhabitants indefinitely. Local foods and domestic meat could be taken only from islands in the southern sector. Lagoon fishing and egg gathering would be unrestricted except for Runit.

In 1981, approximately 100 Enewetok people returned to Ujelang, citing lack of coconuts and other fresh fruits, lack of things to do on Enewetok, and the fear of radiation from residual radioactivity.

The Continuing Tragedy

Beyond the grievances of the northern atoll groups suffering the effects of the testing programme, it is sad to note that in spite of the great need of such groups for assistance, the US Government has reportedly paid only 26% of the Second World War claims adjudicated by US courts. The reason given — a logic difficult for Marshallese to understand — is that the Japanese Government has not paid its corresponding obligation.

And so the tragedy which began almost 40 years ago with the perceived security needs of a powerful nation continues to exact its price among the weak to the present day.

Notes

1. US DOE. "Enewetok Radiological Support Project, Final Report", NVO-213, September 1982, p. 3.
2. Richard, Dorothy E., *US Naval Administration of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands*, Vol. III, Washington, DC, Govt. Printing Office, 1957, p. 510.
3. Mason, Leonard, *Relocation of the Bikini Marshallese, A Study in Group Migration*, PhD dissertation, Yale, U, 1954, p. 263.
4. Kiste : *The Bikinians : A Study in Forced Migration*, Cummings, 1974, p. 27.
5. US DOE, NVO-213, *op. cit.*, p. 4. A location on continental USA was considered as a future permanent site. The Nevada Test Site was ultimately chosen, but atmospheric testing, begun in 1951, was to be limited to weapons with yields below about 75 kilotons.
6. The yields of these devices ranged from 18 to 49 kilotons, as compared to the 22 kiloton yield of the Nagasaki bomb.

MARSHALL ISLANDS, MON AMOUR

by Darlene Keju-Johnson

*(Presentation during the "Pacific Plenary" at the WCC Sixth Assembly,
Vancouver, Canada, 30 July 1983)*

Yokwe kom! Greetings from the Marshall Islands. The Marshallese people have been governed by the United States of America for more than thirty years. Soon after the USA took our island from Japan in World War II, it signed the United Nations Trusteeship agreement for Micronesia. In this agreement, the USA promised to protect our health and to prevent the loss of our lands and resources. It is a promise that the USA never kept.

Before we knew it, our islands were exploding into the air. In all, the USA tested sixty-six atomic and hydrogen bombs at Bikini and Enewetok Atolls — bombs which continue to affect the people today. During the testing, six islands were completely blown off the face of the earth.

In 1946, the US military commander came to Bikini and told the people that the nuclear testing was "for the good of mankind and to end all world wars". The chief didn't really understand this, but one word stuck in his mind and that word was "mankind". He thought mankind was like God, so he told the military commander: "If the testing is for the good of God, then I will let my people go."

What the Americans didn't do was tell the people they would never see their islands again. Instead, the Americans promised the Bikinians that they could return home when the tests were finished. The Bikinians thought this would be very soon — perhaps a few weeks, or at most several months. What they didn't know was that they would never return to their home again.

The Bikinians were resettled three times and the Enewetok people, whose islands were used for 43 nuclear tests, also were relocated. They suffered many problems because the new islands did not have enough resources to support their growing populations. You can imagine the psychological problems the people had because of moving from one island to the next, without any explanations.

The sixty-six nuclear bomb tests contaminated hundreds of Marshallese and American servicemen with radioactive fallout during the 1950's. The list of health problems resulting from this exposure is virtually endless, and includes many cases of

thyroid cancer, leukemia, cataracts, miscarriages and stillbirths. I have interviewed many women from the affected islands who have had more than four miscarriages.

The Marshallese describe these babies as “jelly fish”. The baby is born on the labour table, and it breathes and moves up and down, but it is not shaped like a human being. It looks like a bag of jelly. These babies only live for a few hours. Sometimes, babies are born with growths like horns on their heads, while others have six fingers or toes.

I grew up on the Northern islands, which are downwind of Bikini and Enewetok. Today, I have three tumours in my body — one was taken out recently. I don't know what causes them, but like many Marshallese I am afraid for the future and I am concerned about what will happen if I have children.

Compounding this problem is the inadequate medical treatment provided by the US Government. Instead of helping treat these radiation-related health problems, the US Department of Energy (DOE) scientists use the people like “guinea pigs” in a scientific experiment. One statement, made by the US scientists before allowing a group of Marshallese to return back to a radioactive island, demonstrated the lack of concern for the Marshallese: “Even though the radioactive contamination of Rongelap Island is considered perfectly safe for human habitation, the levels of activity are higher than those found in other inhabited locations in the world. The habitation of these people on the islands will afford most valuable radiation data on human beings.”

Moreover, in thirty years, the US DOE scientists have never provided the Marshallese with personal medical records or tried to explain their health problems to them. In the USA, doctors are required by law to discuss health problems and treatment with their patients. But these same rights have been ignored in the Marshalls. And Marshallese are regularly shipped off to Honolulu, Cleveland, New York and elsewhere for cancer surgery with no explanation whatsoever.

This is why the Marshallese are today requesting the help and support of doctors internationally who are independent of the US Government to provide the necessary health care treatment and monitoring programmes that the Marshallese so urgently need.

As if nuclear tests were not enough, the USA set up the Kwajalein Missile Range in the Marshalls to test its long range nuclear missiles. These missiles are fired from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California and land in Kwajalein's once peaceful lagoon. Again, the USA relocated hundreds of Marshallese from their home islands in Kwajalein for the missile testing. These people were moved to Ebeye Island, where today 8,000 people live crowded on this tiny sixty-six acre island.

The island has been called a “biological time bomb” and the hospital is so understaffed and so poor it cannot possibly provide adequate health care for the Marshallese. My family has lived on Ebeye for many years, and it was as I grew up that I experienced the US military's racist discrimination against the Marshallese — an attitude that continues today.

Kwajalein Island, where the Americans live, with a first class hospital, good schools, and numerous recreational facilities, is just three miles away. But it might as well be 3,000 miles away, for the Marshallese must obtain a pass before they can travel to their

own islands. It is very difficult to gain access to Kwajalein's hospital, even in emergencies, and there have been many cases of children being refused entry into Kwajalein because they don't have a pass and then they die on their return to Ebeye.

Additionally, the Army police searches the Marshallese workers who travel to Kwajalein daily, as if they were criminals. It is a degrading situation that shows little sign of improving. The Army only *leases* the islands, and yet it acts as if it owns them. Imagine what it would do to us if it *owned* the islands !

It is the overcrowded conditions on Ebeye, combined with the fact that the people cannot use two thirds of the lagoon for fishing or the islands for farming which makes the Kwajalein landowners feel like prisoners on Ebeye.

After thirty years of accepting this treatment as second-class citizens, the Kwajalein landowners got together in 1982 and sailed out to their off-limits island in Kwajalein Atoll. For four months, the people took back their islands in protest of the conditions on Ebeye and the discrimination on Kwajalein. More than 1,000 people set up camps on eleven islands. The people were glad to be on their own islands and felt a sense of freedom and peace. For many younger people it was the first time on these islands, and it felt good to eat food from the islands and do things that the people cannot do in Ebeye.

The protest, called "Operation Homecoming", forced the USA to make certain concessions to the Kwajalein landowners to help the problems on Ebeye. But the basic system of injustice remains today. Since signing a three-year lease for use of Kwajalein, the military's treatment of the Kwajalein people has gotten worse, with many new restrictions imposed on the Ebeye community.

All of this activity in the Marshall Islands has been to develop the most destructive weapons of war. Just this June, the USA tested the first MX missile at Kwajalein, and plans to continue with many more, including the Minuteman and Trident. The USA tells us that it is in our island to protect us. But our response is : "Protect us from whom ?" We do not have any enemies. You may be interested to know that there is no word in the Marshallese language for "enemy".

The Marshallese are known throughout Micronesia to be the most friendly people. We always invite people into our homes and give them food and whatever else we have to offer. But the USA has taken advantage of our kindness. Finally today the Marshallese are speaking out because we do not look forward to another thirty years of US military control of our lives.

It is time we, the Marshallese people, controlled our islands. There is growing resentment against military presence at Kwajalein and it is only a matter of time before we remove the base. But we need your support. Without the help of people around the world, we will not be successful in bringing independent medical aid to our islands, or succeed in our struggle to self-determine our future.

RESOLUTION ON THE PACIFIC

The WCC Sixth Assembly has heard the personal and collective testimonies emanating from the inspiring life and witness of Christians and churches in the South Pacific. We give thanks to God for this witness and express our solidarity with the pastoral and prophetic role which the churches of the Pacific and the Pacific Conference of Churches have been playing with regard to a number of urgent problems affecting the present and future Pacific societies :

- the continued nuclear weapons testing in French Polynesia, the effects of radiation on the health and environment of present and future generations in the Marshall Islands;
- dumping of nuclear wastes by outside powers;
- military, notably naval, manoeuvres undertaken by the great powers, which include nuclear weapons-carrying submarines, and which reinforce the militarization of the region;
- threats to the indigenous Pacific cultural identities through colonial and neo-colonial structures involving transnational corporations, foreign media and tourism;
- persistence of foreign domination in French Polynesia and Micronesia;
- the as yet unresolved problem of the self-determination and independence of the Melanesian people of New Caledonia.

The Assembly urges the member churches to strengthen their support for and solidarity with the Christians and churches of the Pacific in their struggles for political and economic independence and for a nuclear free Pacific, by concrete educational and advocacy activities, combined with a pastoral approach involving prayers and intercessions. It is recommended that the WCC programmes involving the Pacific be intensified.

(This Resolution was adopted by the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Vancouver, Canada, 24 July - 10 August 1983.)

CRITICAL CORRESPONDENCE

On 12 August 1983, the *Pacific Daily News* and the *Marshall Islands Journal* published a letter addressed to the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches by Ambassador Fred M. Zeder II, the USA President's Personal Representative for Micronesian Status Negotiations, in which the latter severely criticizes what he presumed to be the report of the WCC delegation which visited the Marshall Islands, and whose report appears in this issue of *Background Information*.

In fact, Ambassador Zeder based his criticism on a United Press International journalist's report on the presentation given by Ms. Darlene Keju-Johnson at the WCC's Sixth Assembly in Vancouver, which is reprinted in the previous pages of this issue. Ms. Keju-Johnson's presentation was one of several given by representatives of the people of the Pacific during a Plenary which highlighted the life and witness of the churches throughout the Pacific.

In the following, we reprint Ambassador Zeder's letter, as well as the responses written by Ms. Keju-Johnson, Mr. B. David Williams, a member of the WCC delegation to the Marshall Islands, and Mr. Victor Hsu, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Headquarters Liaison Office of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs in New York. This correspondence gives clear witness to the need for a more sensitive and factual approach to the problems and needs of the people of the Marshall Islands, as indicated in the report of the delegation.



THE PRESIDENT'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE
FOR MICRONESIAN STATUS NEGOTIATIONS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

August 5, 1983

Mr. Victor Hsu
Commission of the Churches of
International Affairs of the
World Council of Churches
777 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Hsu:

On May 17 of this year, my deputy and I met with you in your New York office. As you will recall the purpose of our visit was to advise you of our interest in a proposed visit representatives of your organization planned to make to the Marshall Islands. It was our understanding that the purpose of your group's visit was to investigate:

1. "The residual effects of low-level radiation;
2. Their human and social conscience; and
3. The best means for the Marshallese people to promote their specific concerns."

Later we learned that a fourth element had been added - "to study the social and human cost of the military presence of the U.S."

As you will recall, I advised you of my concern regarding the accuracy and objectivity of such a report and inquired as to how you intended to use the result of your findings. Also, we offered to assist you in providing you with bona fides studies on the subjects you professed to be interested in, and to do whatever else we could to help you and your group prepare an accurate and balanced analysis. I was disappointed that you did not feel this was necessary. More importantly, I was shocked to learn that no one among the group you planned to send to the Marshalls for your stated purpose of "studying the effects of low-level radiation" had any medical credentials.

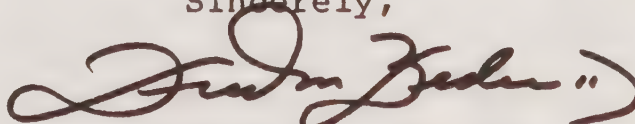
You will also recall that I expressed concerns about your organization using this report as the basis for a presentation to the World Council of Churches Assembly in Vancouver, British Columbia, scheduled for late July. I was particularly concerned that, given the press of time and your seeming disinterest in accepting any assistance from us, you would not be able to present a balanced report. It appears my fears were well-founded.

I have just read the attached UPI report of a statement given by Darlene Keju-Johnson to the 900 delegates at the Vancouver convention. I am aware that the World Council of Churches provides money to Ms. Johnson's Hawaii-based Pacific Concerns Resources Center. I therefore assume that Ms. Keju-Johnson's statement is the report resulting from your group's trip to the Marshalls. I must quite honestly tell you that the report is the most nauseating example of bizarre propaganda I have ever seen. To present this report behind the facade of a religious undertaking is unconscionable.

In God's name Mr. Hsu, if you have one shred of evidence to support Ms. Johnson's claims, I beg you to provide it at once. If there is any truth at all to this report you must come forward with it. If not, you must in good conscience acknowledge this report for what it is. You should then return the donations you received to finance it and apologize to all your members and the general public.

I am sure that through your world wide distribution system this report will be read by millions of people. Many well-meaning Christians and members of other religious beliefs will probably believe what they read. I am also sure this will prove to be a most effective device for soliciting money for your cause. What I am not sure of, is what your cause really is.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Fred M. Zeder II", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fred M. Zeder II
Ambassador

Enclosure

Pacific 'biological time bomb'

U.S. nuclear testing blamed for birth defects

By David E. Anderson

UPI Religion Writer

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Darlene Keju-Johnson looked steadily at the 900 delegates of the World Council of Churches.

The delegates, as they listened attentively, often squirmed in their chairs or looked away as the young woman, a native of the Marshall Islands, described the young infants born to her friends, infants who die in a matter of hours.

"The Marshallese describe these babies as 'jellyfish,'" Johnson said. "The baby is born on the labor table, and it breathes and moves up and down, but it is not shaped like a human being. It looks like a bag of jelly."

"Sometimes, babies are born with growths like horns on their heads, while others have six fingers or toes."

These births, she told the sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches, are the result of U.S. atomic and nuclear

weapons testing, testing that has been going on since the early 1950s.

Johnson spoke at a special plenary session of the council on problems of the indigenous people of the Pacific islands.

Among all the rhetoric, the theology, the cries from the poor and the oppressed, the people of the Pacific, in their dry, understated way, made one of the most dramatic presentations to the delegates from the 300 member communions around the world.

A kind of deep anger and resentment runs through many of the people — an anger directed at the United States, which they blame not only for causing the problems in the first place but also for providing inadequate medical treatment for those who do suffer as a result of the U.S. nuclear testing program.

In 30 years, she said, U.S. scientists "have never provided the Marshallese with personal medical records or tried to explain their health problems to them."

"This is why, the Marshallese are today requesting the help and support of doctors internationally who are independent of the U.S. government to provide the necessary health care treatment and monitoring programs that the Marshallese so urgently need."

She also said the United States has "over and over again relocated the Marshallese, most recently forcing hundreds of people living on Kwajalein to live on the tiny 66-acre island of Ebeye which now houses 8,000 people."

She said the medical facilities for the natives are grossly inadequate and the island has been called a "biological time bomb," but that the Marshallese are denied treatment just three miles away at the U.S. installation.

"It is time we, the Marshallese people, controlled out islands," she said. "There is growing resentment against the military presence at Kwajalein and it is only a matter of time before we remove the base," she said.

School of Public Health
University of Hawaii — Manoa
1960 East West Road
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

August 27, 1983

The Editor
Pacific Daily News
P.O. Box DN
Agana, Guam 96910

Dear Editor,

American Ambassador Fred Zeder called my report of deformed Marshallese babies and other health problems "bizarre". Perhaps if he did his scientific homework he would instead call the health problems themselves bizarre and show some compassion for the problems caused by US nuclear weapons tests.

Mr. Zeder is misinformed on many counts. First of all, I was *not* a member of the World Council of Churches team that went to the Marshall Islands earlier this year. I am a Marshallese graduate student in public health at the University of Hawaii, who worked as an intern with the Department of Health Services in Majuro this past summer. At the WCC's Assembly in Vancouver I presented my own statement, not the Council's, based on US Government studies, independent medical assessments of health problems and health care in the Marshalls, and numerous interviews with Marshallese people.

Mr. Zeder charges that my report is "the most nauseating example of bizarre propaganda" he has ever seen. Perhaps he has not read any of his own government's annual Brookhaven National Laboratory studies of radiation-affected Marshallese. These reports document that between 1954 and 1958 miscarriages and stillbirths among exposed women from Rongelap Atoll were more than double the expected rate for normal Marshallese women (41% to 16%).

There are other serious health problems documented in these US Government reports, including a death rate among exposed people nearly twice that of the general population, thyroid tumours and cancer, growth retardation among children, etc.

Has Mr. Zeder not seen the photographs of grossly deformed babies that are in US Navy files in Washington, DC? These photos of babies born on downwind islands years after the nuclear tests were taken by US Government medical doctors.

It is abundantly clear that Mr. Zeder has also not taken the time to talk to the hundreds of Marshallese who were contaminated with radioactive fallout. The statements of numerous Marshallese, as reported in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (December 1980), the *L.A. Times* (June 11, 1977), *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (April 9, 1975), the *Marshall Islands Journal* (June 6, 1980) and elsewhere, concerning large numbers of miscarriages, deformed children, thyroid cancer and other health problems, should be sufficient to warrant extensive medical examinations and investigation.

But the US Brookhaven National Laboratory only medically examines people from two of these atolls — Rongelap and Utirik — in spite of the fact that the Department of Energy (“Radiological Survey Plan for the N. Marshall Islands”, 8-22-1978) reported that there are 14 atolls or single islands in the Marshalls that “received intermediate range fallout from one or more of the megaton range tests.” And even on these two atolls, US scientists take a very narrow view of health problems. Dr. Konrad Kotrady, a former Brookhaven physician in the Marshalls said : “The program... tends to focus on specific areas, such as the thyroid and blood, where scientists expect effects to occur.”

The United States has limited its health surveys to “expected” radiation problems, instead of undertaking a comprehensive medical investigation. Perhaps the US is worried about laws suits. A more worthy concern would be the provision of adequate health care to all of the Marshallese who need it.

The only way to determine the extent of damage caused by the 66 nuclear bomb tests is to mount a full scale investigation into all aspects of the health of the Marshallese people. But such an epidemiological study of the Marshallese has never been conducted by the United States in its 36 years as Trustee. Therefore, Mr. Zeder has no scientific foundation from which to criticize Marshallese statements.

Lacking scientific backing and contradicted by some of his own government’s scientific reports, Mr. Zeder’s letter insults the Marshallese people by calling their statements “fabrications and untruths”.

Mr. Zeder is denying the Marshallese the right of free speech that the US has taught us for more than 30 years. As a Marshallese and a public health worker I reject Mr. Zeder’s attempts to stifle discussion about vital Marshallese health issues and I challenge him to produce a thorough epidemiological study of the Marshall Islands to support his statements.

Sincerely,

Darlene Keju-Johnson
School of Public Health
University of Hawaii

August 30, 1983

Mr. Dan Smith, Editor
Marshall Islands Journal
P.O. Box 14
Majuro
Marshall Islands 96910

Dear Mr. Smith,

Ambassador Fred M. Zeder's extremely critical open letter concerning Darlene Keju-Johnson's presentation to the World Council of Churches' recent Assembly, as reported in the *Marshall Islands Journal* and in the *Pacific Daily News* on August 12, apparently contained misleading, inaccurate and unfair statements.

It would appear that one of Mr. Zeder's purposes in writing the letter was to discredit the World Council of Churches and to diminish acceptance of the report of the WCC delegation sent to the Marshalls in May of this year.

As one of four members of that delegation and one who attended the WCC Assembly in Vancouver, I wish to make a few comments.

Ms. Keju-Johnson was one of many voices from around the world invited to speak to the Assembly. She speaks not as a technical person but as an authentic Marshallese voice, and she speaks out of deep frustration and pain. Her perception of what has happened in the Marshalls is consistent with that of many Marshallese whom we interviewed in the course of our two week visit. However we interpret these perceptions of real life experience, it would seem strange to deny that they are laden with crucial messages.

Ms. Keju-Johnson was not a member of the WCC visitation team, and contrary to Mr. Zeder's assertion, the team did have some technical capability, having included a senior scientist from an independent research organization based in Washington DC. This scientist specializes in ionizing radiation and its effects upon humans.

The team also included the General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches and a member of the Governing Board of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

It should be noted that while the team included an expert in radiation and its effects, it did not presume to take up a highly technical role. This was essentially a church visitation team sent as an expression of church concern, willing to listen to all persons and groups. The role of the team was interpretive, reflective, consultative and directed towards a clearer, more helpful response on the part of the churches.

This WCC team visit was requested and implemented out of a concern for people, and not as "a way of raising money for the Council's cause", as suggested by Mr. Zeder.

Unfortunately, Mr. Zeder's remarks reflect the attitude we experienced from him as we sought within the scope of our limitations to arrange a meeting between him or his representatives and the team, and to obtain written statements or comments from him regarding the situation in the Marshalls.

I would like to point out that Mr. Zeder's open letter to Mr. Hsu of the WCC was circulated publicly long before it was possible for Mr. Hsu to see it or reply, and the Marshall Islands visitation team has not yet, even at this late date, received copies.

It also seems obvious that Mr. Zeder wrote his letter before he had seen the report of the team.

I hope that Mr. Zeder would not deny that critical unresolved health, land and economic problems remain from the US testing program in the Marshalls; that they continue to have profound impact upon the people, the culture and upon long-term political decisions; and that a maximum of open public questioning and discussion is needed.

Sincerely,

B. David Williams



COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
of The World Council of Churches

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS LIAISON OFFICE
777 United Nations Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10017 U.S.A.

Tel.: (212) 867-5890
Cable: OIKOUMENE NEW YORK

Victor W.C. Hsu, Executive Secretary

12 October 1983

Ambassador Fred M. Zeder II
The President's Personal Representative
for Micronesian Status Negotiations
Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Ambassador Zeder,

Thank you for your letter dated 5 August 1983. I was astonished to note that, eleven days before your letter reached my office, the 12 August edition of both the Pacific Daily News and the Marshall Islands Journal already carried an article about your letter to me. Although I was somewhat surprised that before publishing an article about it neither the News nor the Journal gave the World Council of Churches (WCC) an opportunity to respond to your letter, I am pleased to note that the Journal reproduced in extenso the respective rebuttals of Ms. Darlene Keju-Johnson and the Rev. David Williams, Jr.

I do not believe it necessary now for me to enter into another detailed response to some of the misleading and inaccurate statements contained in your letter. Ms. Keju-Johnson who was not a member of the WCC delegation to the Marshall Islands has already dealt in substance with your charge that her presentation at WCC's Vancouver Assembly was "the most nauseating example of bizarre propaganda" and the Rev. Williams, as a member of that delegation wrote to you pointing out that Ms. Keju-Johnson's presentation about the effects of radiation on the culture and life of her people was "consistent with that of many Marshallese whom we interviewed in the course of our two week visit."

However, I do wish to make three comments in response to your letter. First, on the question of "accuracy and objectivity" of the report. It seems to me, as you and I had discussed in my office on May 16, that neither you nor I can ever say that we know what is accurate or objective regarding the experience of the impact on the Marshall Islands arising out of atom bomb testings and the military presence of the United States government.

./...

Director: Ninan Koshy
Headquarters: 150, route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland Tel. (022) 98 94 00 Telex: 23 423 OIK CH Cable: OIKOUMENE GENEVA

Moderator: Olie Dahlén

It is the people of the Marshall Islands, the victims of both radioactive fallout and the US military presence, who should be the ultimate judge about the accuracy and objectivity of whatever you or I may say about their situation.

Secondly, with reference to your conviction that the WCC is using the delegation's visit as a "most effective device for soliciting money" for our "cause", I should like respectfully to reiterate for your better understanding of the ecumenical movement, the following: the WCC is a fellowship of 303 churches from over 100 countries which contribute financially and otherwise for work in such areas as evangelism, theological education, inter-church aid, primary health care, development and international affairs in order to give full expression to the unity of the church and the unity of humankind. The diversity of its work, grounded in an unremitting commitment to the biblical vision of justice can be demonstrated by the open and highly publicized proceedings of its Vancouver Assembly. The visit to the Marshall Islands was but one aspect of its multifaceted engagements around the world and the funds raised were from only three of the hundreds of its partners on the basis of the budget established specifically for the expenses of the delegation. As regards our "cause", the WCC makes no apology for taking the side of the victims of oppression and violation of human rights and for promoting justice in a much troubled world by publicizing and combatting the manifestations of injustice as experienced and perceived by the marginalized and the oppressed. But in the exercise of this ecumenical conviction, the WCC also fully recognizes that to be the voice of conscience through word and deed it will attract the wrath of those bent on preserving their power and privileges.

My third and final remark pertains to your deliberately inaccurate assertion that we were seemingly disinterested in accepting any assistance from you. The facts point to the contrary. Soon after their return from the visit Ms. Kara Cole and Rev. Williams repeatedly sought to visit you in Washington, D. C., in order to share their concerns with you. Unfortunately you did not accommodate their request. As for my efforts, I'll simply remind you of this paragraph of my letter to you dated April 29, 1983:

"Thank you also for offering to provide the delegation with facts and background information. As I am quite sure that the delegation will be very much interested to have them at its disposal, I welcome warmly your offer. Based on the framework of the visit as I had indicated in my letter of April 8, would it be possible for your staff to supply the delegation with a concise summary of what they deem to be

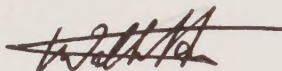
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"the most helpful or essential? In connection with this proposal, the delegation would be quite prepared to set aside 90 minutes on May 20 to have a discussion on your documentation with a member of your staff or you yourself. However, if the time is inconvenient for your Office, we would still very much like to receive your paper so that the delegation would have the benefit of your views and information prior to its visit as well as for its report."

It is now a matter of history that nothing was received by the delegation from your office in spite of our offer.

I am sending a copy of this letter to both the Pacific Daily News and the Marshall Islands Journal.

Sincerely yours,



Victor W. C. Hsu
Executive Secretary

PREVIOUS ISSUES OF CCIA BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1979/No. 1 Human Rights in the Republic of Korea (out of print)
- 1979/No. 2 33rd Session A Report on the United Nations General Assembly, from the U.N. Headquarters Liaison Office (English)
- 1979/No. 3 The Indochina Conflict : Basic Elements (English)
- 1980/No. 1 34th Session A Report on the United Nations General Assembly, from the U.N. Headquarters Liaison Office (English)
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**Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
of the World Council of Churches**

Central Office

150 route de Ferney
1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland
Tel. : (022) 98 94 00
Cable : OIKOUMENE GENEVA
Telex : 23 423 OIK CH

UN Headquarters Liaison Office

777 United Nations Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10017
USA
Tel. : (212) 8675890
Cable : OIKOUMENE NEW YORK
Telex : WCC/CCIA
c/o NCCC USA 23 45 79 New York